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the coal-mines, and if the Chinese Government would permit some European merchants to work those mines with steam machinery a good supply could be obtained for our Indian steamers. The Japanese Government had already granted such a privilege to Europeans, who were working the mines with signal success. He hoped Mr. Cooper would renew his attempt to reach the head-waters of the Yang-tsze-kiang, and he believed the proper way to effect this was from India.

Admiral Sir W. HALL, who commanded the *Nemesis* during the Chinese war, claimed for Admiral Collinson and Admiral Kellet credit for surveying the lower part of the Yang-tsze-kiang up to Nankin. The result of their taking the British fleet up the river was an immediate desire on the part of the enemy for peace, to obtain which they not only agreed that, instead of the one port, Canton, five of their ports should be thrown open to our commerce, but that they would bear the entire expense of the war. It was a matter for deep regret that no advantage had yet been taken of the immense quantities of coal in China, which might be made available for our Indian steamers.

2. *Route from Tientsin to Kiachta.* By W. A. WHYTE, F.R.G.S.

The journey I am going to give a brief description of, commenced at Tientsin, in the north of China, and ended at Kiachta, on the Russian-Siberian frontier. Our party consisted of two, Mr. Walcott, an American gentleman, and myself. I believe we are the first who have travelled over that portion of the globe during the winter months, also that the direction we took was more northerly, consequently shorter, than that generally taken by the few Russian officials and others who have passed through the Desert of Gobi.

We started from Tientsin at three o'clock on the afternoon of the 16th October, 1869. Our mode of travelling was in carts drawn by mules.

It is possible to go by water to within about 20 miles of Pekin, but it takes three or four days; whereas the land-transit is generally accomplished in forty-eight hours. We took with us two Chinese servants, who acted as interpreters, and were very useful to us on the way.

Pekin is now too well known for me to enter into any details about it. The impression, however, it left on my mind was, that it was, without exception, the most miserable, dirty, poverty-stricken town in China; and, when I say this, it means in the world.

I do not, of course, refer to a portion of Pekin which is called the Imperial City, as it is not open to the inspection of foreigners, and, from all one can judge from the exterior, it presents as grand an appearance as the Chinese city does a wretched one.

We left Pekin early on the 20th October, and continued for some time to skirt along the magnificent outer walls of the town, our direction being north-west. The road, as far as Yuen-ming-yuen, is

made of solid granite slabs, now, however, very much in decay. The Imperial hunting-grounds and the Summer Palace, which latter is now in ruins, we reached in a few hours, the distance from Pekin being 12 miles. Here the scenery improves very much, and continues to do so the whole way to Kalgan; but trees become very scarce, and, after a time, disappear entirely, as also do all signs of cultivation. Passing through the town of Nankow, our course being a little more westerly, we proceeded through the long pass, or, rather, defile of that name, its extent being about 13 miles. The scenery here was excessively grand; but the road—which may have deserved such a name centuries ago—was so rough, that it was a wonder to us how the mules managed to scramble over it in safety. When we reached the summit of the pass, 2400 feet over the sea-level, it well repaid us all we had gone through. The cold increased as we advanced, and the wind became intensely cutting, raising clouds of sand and stones. A curious thing that we noticed—which may be called a wall mania—was, that every town or village we passed through on leaving Pekin was walled round, and even isolated buildings were surrounded by sometimes as many as two and three walls, but all now more or less in decay; a word which would be a genuine motto for China, and all in it. After leaving the pass, our direction was more north. Passing over a very handsome old bridge, consisting of five arches, evidence of the previous existence of a large river, now only a small stream, we entered the town of Cha-tow, the best we had seen since leaving Pekin.

The inns all the way from Pekin—although very miserable and dirty, compared with the most ordinary buildings of the kind found in small villages in civilized parts of the world—are much better than those on the route from Tientsin. We were now proceeding on a table-land some 1700 feet over the sea-level, and, passing through the towns of Sha-chen and Chi-ming, we entered a wide valley, on the west side of which we could distinguish a long, lofty range of snow-clad mountains. We followed the right bank of the River Yungho, which runs through this valley for six or seven miles, going through a small pass cut out of the rock. We found amongst the rocky mountains which line the east side of the river, indications of coal, and we discovered a shaft, now in disuse. There were also abundant proofs of the whereabouts of copper and iron, and mining operations here would be, I should think, successful, if the Chinese Government could be induced to allow them; and probably gold would also be found there, as there is a range of hills not far off, called by the Chinese “Check-Mun,” or Golden Mountains, deriving their name, doubtless, from that precious metal having

been, at some distant period, found there. Here, for the first time, we came across long caravans of camels laden with brick-tea for Russia. We also saw large herds of very fine sheep; the animals having a peculiar tail, very short, and much prized by the Mongols, it consisting nearly entirely of fat. Leaving the river, we gradually ascended until we reached the town of Suan-hwa-foo, 2000 feet over the sea-level. On the 24th at 10 in the morning, we came to Chanchia-kow, or more commonly called Kalgan, a Mongol word, which means entrance-gate, the distance from Pekin being 147 miles. It had taken us four days to do this journey. This town is the last one in China, and situated at the foot of the Kalgan Pass, where commences the great Desert of Gobi.

On entering Kalgan we were at once agreeably struck with the evident signs of prosperity we noticed. The streets, which are long and wide, were lined with shops, all roofed with a peculiar mud found in these regions, which becomes nearly as hard as stone, but not so hard as to prevent crops of grass growing on it, which gives a curious appearance to the town. They were crowded with strings of camels and oxen-carts, all laden with produce to or from Russia. Mongols, clad in divers-coloured clothes, riding on camels, were hurrying about here and there, looking after their caravans. After the quiet of the country, it was a scene of utter confusion to us, and we could imagine we were realizing a tale out of the 'Arabian Nights.' We remained jammed in the principal street for upwards of an hour, and my attention was much taken up by the swaying about of my litter, as it bumped against the passing camels and carts, and threatened every moment to capsize into the mud; but, at last, we got clear, by taking a *détour* and passing under a low gate in the walls, which obliged us to descend from our litters. We reached the suburbs, and, after a little trouble, found the residence of a Russian gentleman, to whom we had letters of introduction, and by whom, although we were perfect strangers, we were most kindly received and hospitably entertained during our stay there. It took us three days to complete the necessary arrangements for crossing the desert. We had to procure an outfit consisting of sheep-skin coats and boots, &c., stores and camels, and two old carts for shelter at night. Without the kind aid of our Russian hosts, who took no end of trouble in the matter, we might have remained there for weeks, as the Mongols are about the most difficult race of people to conclude a bargain with, and we had no knowledge of their language. The Mongols have a great respect for Russians. Their knowledge of geography is very limited; they believe that Mongolia is the centre of the world, bounded on one side by Russia, and

on the other by China; the existence of other nations is quite unknown to them, so it was important for us, if possible, to pass as Russians.

Everything being comfortably arranged for the long journey before us, and having dismissed our servants, who were not willing to go on with us, we started away again on the 26th.

The Kalgan Pass was a very rough one, and jolted my cart about sadly, jumbling all the contents, which I had arranged in a most scientific manner, into the centre, and putting me into a state of utter despair. We reached its summit, 6000 feet over the sea-level, at sunset, and a more glorious sight I have never seen—ranges upon ranges of mountains, some clad with snow, rising like ocean waves in utter confusion, stretched far away, as far as we could see; not a sign of verdure of any kind. We could trace the Great Wall skirting along the tops and sides of the mountains, with its gates and towers, making us wonder how ever the bricks and mortar got there; and as we stood contemplating the scene, with our two Lama guides, we were the only living beings in sight. For the moment we could not resist, as the sun gradually set and long shadows extended across the picture we were gazing upon, a feeling of desolation which crept over us, feeling so far away from all aid and so entirely at the mercy of our guides. However, the increasing cold making it necessary for us to move on, gave us a brisk walk, which soon dispelled our gloomy thoughts. We soon passed through a gap in the wall and found ourselves in Mongolia. The wall, which is now in ruins and some parts hardly traceable, is said by the Chinese to be 3000 miles in extent. It may be so with all its spurs. Darkness coming on, we mounted into our carts, and jogging away down hill over rocks and stones—a ride that will ever live in my memory—we reached the Desert of Gobi at one o'clock in the morning of the 27th October.

The temperature the whole way until we reached Kiachta was never higher than 24° Fahrenheit, and sometimes was as low as 30° below zero. The altitudes we passed over varied from 3400 to 6000 feet. After the first week vegetation entirely disappeared, and how our camels managed to exist was a marvel. Until we reached Tsagan Turgerik, 300 miles from Kalgan (lat. 45°, long. 104°), we hardly knew our whereabouts. This was the only place we saw after leaving Kalgan which we could designate a Mongol village. It consisted of a small white temple, from whence it takes its name, and a group of about ten yourts, which are a sort of round tent made of felt, lined with skins, consisting of one room, where all the family live together.

After leaving Tsagan Turgerik we passed over large plains of snow for two days, and then again over a sandy desert, and for three days had to get on as well as we could without water, as we could find none. The cold north-east winds, which at this season are prevalent, swept with a force beyond description over the plain. No amount of clothes would keep it out, and it found its way through the numberless cracks in our carts and rendered for the time our existence a burden to us. About the centre of this portion of the desert we passed through, we found large plains covered with most beautiful pebbles and very curious petrifications—a clear evidence that this part of the globe must at some time have been under water.

The natives are strong sturdy Tartars; they live on horseback, tend their flocks of sheep and camels, pitch their tents when and where they choose, have no laws to obey, and no taxes to pay. They, of course, are Chinese subjects, but the Emperor would find it a difficult matter to enforce obedience amongst these children of the desert.

The women are generally good-looking, strongly built, and very healthy; but they dress during the winter months so like the men, that at any distance it is difficult to discern the difference. They have not the peculiar cast in the eye which the Chinese women have, but full dark ones, and rather high cheek-bones. They are very fond of finery, and wear quantities of glass beads in their hair and about their dress. I remember one morning riding up alone to a yourt to ask for milk. A very handsome Mongol woman came out and invited me in; her husband soon joined her, and I have never experienced so much genuine kindness as I did from them. When I rose to leave I gave the woman two small ten-cent. pieces, at which she testified the greatest delight, alternately holding them to her ears and then showing them to her husband, who, as a mark of his satisfaction, grinned incessantly. As she stood up—and a tall woman she was—her magnificent black hair fell down and nearly reached the ground, forming a picture, with her dusky flashing eyes and well-formed shape, that a painter would have envied and a poet dreamt of. When I bid adieu they both came out, the husband holding my pony as I mounted, and often as I looked behind I could see them still standing outside their yourt gazing after me. I dare say they wondered who the stranger was who could not understand their tongue, and could only converse in signs; and I have no doubt but that they often remember my visit as one of the most curious events in their simple life.

About 130 miles from Tsagan Turgerik we passed over some

remarkable-looking hills, which were decidedly volcanic; we also discovered lava, which would prove that volcanic action must have occurred here at some previous period. We encamped after passing these hills near a group of yourts; the inhabitants, numbering about twenty, came down in a body to stare at us. They seemed highly astonished to see us eat our soup with spoons—an excess of refinement unknown amongst them, their method being to dip a wooden saucer in the caldron and haul out lumps of meat with their fingers, swallowing them whole.

On the 12th November, 17 days from Kalgan, we distinguished at the end of a long valley the Chinese town of Mai-Mai-Chin, which is situated in front of the Mongol capital town of Kurin, called by the Russians Urga. This was, with the exception of Tsagan Turgarik, the first known town or village we had seen in the Desert. Beyond knowing a few Mongol words, we had been unable to converse with our Lamas, so, of course, our only resource was to place implicit confidence in them, which they well deserved.

We now came to the River Toll or Tula, which is a branch of the Selenga before it enters the Lake Baikal. We fully expected a serious delay here, as at times it becomes very much swollen and difficult to ford, and there are no ferry communications; however, we found it hard frozen, and crossed over without difficulty. We had been existing on very limited supplies of water for some time, so it may be imagined how pleased we were to be able to fill our bottles through the holes in the ice (lat. 48°, long. 106° 50'), although we were nearly frost-bitten by doing so.

Passing through Mai-Mai-Chin we arrived at the Russian Consulate, a fine large building situated between the two towns. There is no doubt but that the Russian frontier will be pushed on by little and little until it reaches Urga, and for this reason Russia keeps a Consular establishment there. Her interest already is much greater amongst the Mongols than the Chinese is. We were most kindly received by the Russian Vice-Consul, who was as pleased to see us as we were to see him, as beyond his guard of Cossacks, who are not composed of the most inviting-looking individuals, he seldom saw an European face.

Mongolia may be said to end at Urga virtually, and Siberia to commence, as the whole appearance of the country changes. Sandy plains disappear, and make way for mountains covered with pine-forests and large grassy plains, with increasing signs of cultivation; but the natives deteriorate, being no longer the civil honest people of the desert. This we attributed to the near approach of civilized towns, as it became more marked when we approached Kiachta.

These two towns stand alone in the Desert, being 605 miles from Kalgan and 175 from Kiachta. The whole transport of goods to and from Russia passes through them, and re-arrangements are generally made at Mai-Mai-Chin for the continuation of the transport, which accounts for that town—which is purely Chinese, and a very flourishing one—being built by the cunning Celestials in front of Kurin, and so intercepting the trade.

We left again on the same evening, and crossed three mountain passes, and had to hire oxen to take our carts over, camels being useless when ascending for draught purposes; and very hard work it was, as a great deal of snow had fallen, and, it being frozen, the ground was very slippery. The highest elevation was 4500 feet. We passed afterwards over a succession of what seemed boundless undulating prairies, and shot on them a few wild gurush, a small species of deer, but not very palatable eating. On the 15th we crossed the rivers Boro and Cara—on the ice.

We passed more yourts as we advanced, but very poor in appearance compared to those we had seen on the Desert. On the 16th we reached Baingol, a small collection of yourts, and here the cold became intense. We were much annoyed by violent storms of sleet, and the wind was so strong that even our camels refused to advance against it, and we had to make frequent halts; we were perfectly miserable, our fingers frozen and no means of getting warm, as we could not light a fire or pitch a tent. We crossed over the Rivers Orogol and Sharogol on the ice. On the morning of the 17th we entered what seemed an interminable wood, gradually descending towards a vast plain, at the end of which we felt sure Kiachta was situated; and our surmises proved correct, for at four in the afternoon we distinguished the two white spires of the Russian churches which mark the spot. To describe our feelings would be impossible: twenty-three days we had been wandering in Mongolia; during that time we had never slept under any shelter but the wretched one that our carts afforded us, which was, at the least, an aggravation of misery. We entered Kiachta (lat. 50°, long. 106°) on the morning of the 18th November, 1869. The thermometer was then standing at 40° below zero; and here, at the comfortable residence of a Russian gentleman, our journey thus far ceased.

A few observations will conclude all I have to say. Mongolia is believed to be divided into two divisions, North and South: North comprises four provinces; South eight or ten. There are three routes known by natives from Kalgan to Kurin: one, usually travelled over by caravans; another, which we came by, rather shorter;

and one, reserved by the Chinese Government for post-couriers—the longest.

The population is divided into clans; but as they have no method of obtaining a census, their number is unknown. Few of them, even of their Lamas, know how to read or write. Their language is distinct from Tartar or from Chinese, although Chinese is the character used, they having no alphabet or literature of their own. They live in the Desert, travel about with their camels, and subsist on their flocks of sheep, selling the wool to Chinese and Russians. Where a village of yourts may have existed a week before, no traces of it may be found after that period, they being constantly on the move, which renders it impossible to fix correctly the whereabouts of any village or town.

I would strongly advise any who wish to travel this route to do so at the same season in the year as we did, as although it is cold there is no fear of rain, which in other seasons is very abundant. The ground is hard and better for travelling over, and the camels are in winter condition, being useless in summer.

The PRESIDENT tendered the thanks of the Society to Mr. Whyte for his paper. A few years ago a delightful description of a large portion of Mongolia was given by Atkinson, the well-known traveller. Though the difficulties to be overcome in crossing that wild region were very great, one English lady, Mrs. Atkinson, had accomplished the journey, and he was happy to find the Government had—on her own account, and for her very attractive and instructive volume descriptive of her journey—recognised her claims since the death of her husband, and granted her a small pension.

Mr. LOCKHART thought if the author of the paper had remained longer in Peking he would have seen beauties even of architectural decoration there. No doubt political troubles had caused a great deal of dilapidation, but a country that had maintained itself for so many centuries, that had produced a large amount of wealth, that had blessed the world with many of its products, whose mountains and valleys were cultivated to an extent far beyond anything to be seen in England, that had an extensive literature, the production not only of the learned in past years, but of scholars of the present day, that had universities scattered throughout the country, to which thousands of students resorted for their examination—such a country could not be in quite so sad a state of ruin and decay as the paper intimated. He had been in houses and temples at Peking which were as handsome and as well kept, in Chinese fashion, as our houses and temples in England. The Temple of Heaven was one of the handsomest and most interesting buildings he had ever stepped into. He differed from Mr. Whyte in these few particulars, but he gave him all credit for the very pleasant and interesting manner in which he had detailed his adventurous journey across the plains of Tartary.
